

James Gevas

A: The one story that was triggered by mentioned [Metopolis] -- and they're a large clan; I'm not sure which one it was, but I think it was...

Q: Peter.

A: Peter. I remember one time I went to [Wexil's]. That was -- you were in the suburbs compared to us; you wouldn't know where that was -- but that was a candy store at the intersection of [Sydney Place] and West Market, and Father Lucas had just arrived... I could tell he liked Father Lucas, but in those days the ethos of the era and of the place was that you never said anything sentimental. You [slipped]. So he said, "I've met Father [Kelly]!"  
(laughter)

M: Father Kelly...

A: (inaudible) how this connected, but everybody understood it was --

(break in audio)

(Gevas sound effect)

(break in audio)

A: -- you could tell he liked him, but that [thing] grabbed him because --

(break in audio)

(Gevas sound effect)

(break in audio)

A: -- and he was flustered. He didn't know what to do, so the only thing he could do was react and let you figure it out. So, Mr [Wexil]...

Q: All right, I'm going to go back. You did tell us when your family came, where your family came from in Greece, right? And what prompted them to come. You were born here, right?

A: Yeah, (inaudible), but we were born here.

Q: Right. Tell me about your father first.

A: OK. My father -- and I'll put this... There's a caveat in at the very beginning: I will be ruthlessly honest. If I don't want to say something I just won't say it, and I say that because I'm going to say some very flattering things, and being the guy with unlimited humility that I am doesn't bother me, but I tell you ahead of time. My father was an unusually bright man. You know, my whole life has been professionally, and otherwise, but I've met [bright] people all my life and I'm very IQ oriented. I'm sensitive to that to a fault. He was way up there.

(break in audio)

(Gevas sound effect)

(break in audio)

A: -- really bright people. He was one of those, I think.

What happened was he was born into not only a poor village, but a poor family. His father was a cobbler who had some kind of a maybe perverse obsession with capturing and killing snakes. He invited people, and he would do his cobbling at night, and, of course, the village, which I'll describe briefly in a minute, as were all villages of that era in that region, [compact]. He came from a village called [Triter], which was in (inaudible), within -- at night when the lights are on the Delphi, within eyesight of Delphi (inaudible) the right place on the slopes of Mount Parnassus overlooking the (inaudible), and he was very, very poor. He had no water at the time, but it's mentioned by [hombres], by troops in the Iliad, the Odyssey, one of the two, so it was there forever, and the local lore has it it's the place where they found stones used in the idols as eyes at Delphi. Whether that's true or not I don't know but it has that kind of a history, and my father told me that in his early boyhood several French archaeologists came and they took away a tablet that was imbedded in the soil, which was from the Hellenistic period. It was a very old place,

but godforsaken -- there's no water, no [oil left]. So that's where my father was born. His lineage originated in the north of Greece, and apparently it's a very illustrious story. The patriarch (inaudible), he was from [impetus], or [a line started up there], and had an illustrious warfare history because of the Turks. They chased them out of there and they ended up [all parts of Greece].

(break in audio; sound effect)

A: We had been in that (inaudible) for, as best I could tell, at least seven, maybe eight generations, and what would happen -- when you read a book on (inaudible) you see this, too, a book that I've read -- these (inaudible, Greek?), who were guns for hire, sometimes they [attack] Greeks, but they were the only organized entity that knew how to use weapons and all that, and they were crucial to the War of Independence. During the occupation of Greece, before (inaudible), sometimes the Turks would hire them as local police or something, but once -- but every time there was a (inaudible), which was about every 25 years (inaudible) over those 400 years, they were always leading figures, not the only ones but leading. So I grew up with that war. He was intensely patriotic, also understood the Greek foibles. His

favorite saying was (inaudible, Greek). You know what that means?

Q: Yes.

A: So when he was eight he left -- he only went to school for two years; when he was eight, he went to a neighboring, slightly larger village, and worked in what we would here call a grocery store. So he was away from the parental influence from then. He would come back when it was time to scratch the soil. He had two sisters and two brothers. One of the brothers died from the kick of a donkey, I think, and the other brother ended up living with us. (inaudible). So it was that kind of an upbringing, devoid of any education, and empty of any intellectual nurturing. He left Greece around 12, he was about 12, and he came to Manhattan. His first cousin --

M: What year was that? Do you remember?

A: I can guess. We think, but we don't know, he was born in 1893, so it was probably about 1905. He first went to Manhattan and lived in the house of his oldest cousin, who was the father of Chris Argyris.

Q: He came alone, in other words.

A: He came alone. Chris Argyris' father and my dad were first cousins. He lived there and worked as a shoeshine kid,

which is something that so many other Greeks did in Manhattan, in midtown Manhattan. One of the few Greeks at that time who was educated saw that my father had a brain to -- wanted to take him, I don't know whether to legal adopt him or not, and send him to school. But my father has a pickup general theme that I recall about the Greeks in general, besides my dad, using my parents as an instrument. My father, as was true with 99% of the men at that time who had come here without women, in my father's case obviously without a wife: they came intending to go back. This was like the Mexican (inaudible), because I have met -- I mention this because you have heard something to the contrary, on the phone you have heard this -- I have met zillions of old Greeks. I don't think I met one who didn't come here expecting to go back. They came here more to earn dowries for their sisters than even to make money. That I'm not sure of, but I'm [connotating] because my father never said that explicitly, but I know the dominant drive was to earn dowries for his sister. It was a horrific practice but it was (inaudible). So he worked there and learned English by reading the not high-brow newspapers; I don't know what he read in New York, but I grew up with, until I had my own choice, reading the Daily News, New York Daily News. He acquired a really extensive vocabulary, surprisingly broad,

and he had a broad perspective on life. What he did when he came to Newark -- it's a little murky, but I know that he was amongst... He was very religious, as was my mother, I mean very. I know that at a pretty young age he had opened the [Essex] Restaurant -- I have a picture of that -- on Broad Street, and they had a (inaudible). He built the business on two things: his brother's cooking, which was superb, and one of these brick ovens which do a great job in cooking. People used to come from New York to the Essex Restaurant, which, if you saw the picture you'd see was like dumpy looking. (inaudible) because of the food. My uncle was not -- he was intelligent but not interested in reading that type of thing particularly. He was a great cook, though, so that combination worked fine and they thrived. He was then, from the beginning, always active in St. Nicholas, and when the [haifa] came around he became very active in it. As I said, I'm going to branch off into other things, using my stories as -- yeah, go ahead, any time.

Q: Where did...? Did he land on Ellis Island?

A: Yes.

Q: And where was the Essex Restaurant? On what street?

A: On Broad Street, directly across the street from the City Hall. Now -- and this is what I mean by branching --

Q: That's OK!

A: No, no, no, I really want you, I really implore you to interrupt me if there's anything I can offer, because you're likely [to hear] -- if you don't do that you're likely to forget, yourself. Since the Essex Restaurant was facing City Hall, almost precisely, he got to know the politicians, all of them, and he was considered and called the Greek Ambassador. That, coupled with his natural inclination and mental framework I guess I'd call it, led him into really a very active involvement in politics, city politics. He was, as I said, extremely nationalistic, and [he was white at the time, way way]. He saw that -- he was very unselfish -- he was that the American political system was a system of spoils, was corrupt. Corrupt, in this sense... It was corrupt in bribery; it was also corrupt in the sense that most democracies are, because if you organize yourself properly you get more than your fair share, you as an ethnic or any other group. So he figured that out real quick and said, "We Greeks have to become politically potent." [He talked to me about this all the time]. But he became widely known. If you want, I can branch off and bring my mother into this story, because they interact. I'll make a brief detour to my mother. My mother, my mother's mother and father both came from Kastania, which is outside of Sparta.



It's a narrow [walk]. And she was, her maiden name was [Anarticus]. Her side, her clan several generations back had been amongst the leading clan of Kastania. Her great-grandfather or grandfather, one of the two, was the -- Kastania was a town, as opposed to my dad's village, small town but a town. Her grandfather or great-grandfather, unfortunately I forgot which, was a pharmacist, which in those days was like the doctor and prestigious, socially important, too. But he was a character apparently and if you didn't have money he didn't take -- and lots of people told me this -- he gave you what he gave you free, and he lost everything from goodness. Fortunately, neither my brother-in-law nor myself suffered from that disease. (laughter) So what happened was the fortune to the clan more than eclipsed, went down the precipice, and they lost standing in the town, and when the now important church in Sparta was being built my grandfather, my mother's father, saw -- he must have said this -- and my mother, as you'll soon see, never saw much of her father. That was the story. He saw his future wife standing -- he looked up at her -- she was standing on the ladder. Now, I don't know if he was right underneath (laughter) or at a distance! Knowing the Greek mores, they probably would have strung him up if he was underneath, so I always [said] the story would have a

detour, depending on whether it was the Greece of that day or of this era, but that's a little wise-guy stuff. So he fell in love with her, and she with him. The problem was, she came from the then current core of the elite of Kastania, and her family would not accept him because they had fallen from (inaudible). You see, they were very spiritual people, but you had your wallet. And they refused that marriage, her parents. I never heard about his parents, even if they were alive, but about her parents and their... So they eloped. They went to (inaudible) where there was a bishop, and he married them; I have the certification. I'll note that my mother was born over a year after the wedding, so it was not a shotgun wedding. That's the first thing I looked when I got the --

Q: Did you really?

A: Of course! (laughter) So they moved up to Lynn, Massachusetts -- actually Peabody first, then Lynn -- and my mother was born in Lynn, Massachusetts. Her mother was a strikingly beautiful woman, as was my mother in her youth. She always looked nice; I mean she was really striking when she was young. And when she -- during one of her pregnancies she was chopping wood; the wood chopped off, hit her abdomen, and she didn't complain to her husband, my

grandfather about pain which grew, and she died of abdominal -- it must have been infection.

Q: (inaudible), right?

A: So my mother was four when she was an orphan. He had, grandfather had done well; they already owned the house, and I don't know if he had a business but they must've since he owned the house. He had hardly been in Massachusetts. But he didn't want his kids to grow up American, so he brought them back to Greece, and my mother grew up in Greece. She was an orphan, and he went back, he remarried a woman who didn't want my mother, and my grandfather was a little off the bean here because he was so deeply in love with his first wife he would sit, and his new second wife would catch him, holding the picture of his first wife and crying. She ripped up the pictures. I don't have the picture of her, but I've seen in Greece the picture of her sister and they said they were dead images of each other. She was really a strikingly beautiful woman, blond, really nice. Then nobody would pick up, you know -- my mother was a problem, and her stepmother didn't want her, and she was picked up and raised in an elitist home in Sparta. Captain [Zafalias] is one of the heroes of the revolutions, the Greeks, 1821, an attorney, wealthy. She, her sister and her sister were

raised in that home. They were basically hired hands who were raised, and my mother did all the maid stuff, cooking, everything. They loved her. The patriarch in the family, the grandson of this era would kiss her every night and every morning, they'd come to her bed, but that only went so far. Her sister -- not her sister -- the other siblings all went to college, which was [part of the Greek thing]. My mother didn't go to school. I guess she had one year. But she always, she remembered bananas in this country and she always wanted to go back. Now, my uncle Nick, who he knows, recently died, he wasn't picked up by this family. He was raised by the stepmother initially and then his grandmother, and he worked as an aide, as a helper to (inaudible). So my mother, then, when she became of age wanted (inaudible) back to the United States, which he saw as salvation and freedom, and an uncle of hers, her father's brother brought her here. By the way, the guy that brought her from Kastania to Athens stayed with her in the hotel that night and made sure she remained a virgin was the father of Nick [Modus], Mr. [Modus]. See, in those days the (inaudible, Greek) were like brothers, so... (laughter) So he put her in a room, locked the door! (laughter) I said, "I'm surprised he even put you in a bed to make sure you were safe!" She said, "He made sure!" So she came to this country, and she was very

pretty and beautiful, and she stayed with Gus (inaudible) family. At least, I think that's who he is; he's a very handsome guy, and used to (inaudible)... In any event, he's still alive in New York, (inaudible).

Q: Oh, all right, OK.

A: Excuse me, (inaudible). I called him and never responded. I'm surprised!

M: Nick Gevas gave me his telephone, 'cause they're [compadres].

A: Yeah, yeah, Nick (inaudible)... Anyway, but anyway, so what happened was she lived on the corner of 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Harvard Street where Beatrice Gevas, now Beatrice [Badill] lived, her parents. They introduced my father to my mother and it happened. She was 19 and my dad was 13 years older, but so now I brought her into the picture. So he had big visions. He was very aggressive. And founded the restaurant -- and I have a copy for you of the postcard. It was the most elegant restaurant of its day in Newark. It had paintings on the wall. You'll see. And he wanted to build a classy restaurant -- it was on the ground floor of one of the important hotels in Newark, the Douglas Hotel, if you remember. When you went into the lobby of the Douglas

Hotel, one of the entrances off the lobby was a Gevas Restaurant.

Q: Where was the Douglas Hotel located?

A: On Hill Street, half a block in from Grove Street, between Broad and [Foster]. So as sophisticated as my father was, very for his age, he didn't know, had not had enough exposure to check these things out: Broad Street was the old US-1. They relocated Broad Street -- at the time he'd built the Gevas Restaurant, moved from the Essex Restaurant to the Gevas Restaurant, because business was booming and he was making money hand over fist. The waiters had bow ties and were really classy, because I heard it described by not only him but others. And two things hit him in tandem: one was the Depression, and two was the traffic flow which he used to benefit from, the US-1 traffic flow was now where US-1 now is. It might have had an interim move to Mulberry Street, I don't know. I don't remember, but I know it was on Broad Street. So the Depression plus that, plus he was now extended -- he put a lot of money into the operation and he was still a young guy.

(break in audio; sound effect)

A: So he was very proud, and he never went on relief, even though nobody would hire him. They all thought that Gus

Gevas had a lot of money. You know, all these Greeks, no matter how well they did, they all complained that they were broke. Unbelievable! That's a national disease! It really is! That's a whole story of itself. [Admit that], it's fascinating. But they were wrong, he didn't have any money. So what he did is he joined the waiters' union, but they didn't have much business, either.

M: And what year are we talking? 1929?

A: He lost the business in 1930. I was born in 1929. So my mother and my dad had lived in the house which they jointly owned with Mr. Argyris, Chris Argyris' father, 194 Clinton Place in the (inaudible) section in Newark. It's now paved over [for 78] (inaudible). So obviously he couldn't keep up the mortgage payment, so he sold out to Mr. Argyris, who was doing well -- he was importing olives -- plus he was a partner in, and I'm sure Mr. Argyris told you, a business downtown, so that partnership changed. My father's share was picked up by his sister, who had married Peter [Karanosis], who had a still going business, diner business. So they moved to [Sydney] Place in Newark, downtown, which is right off between Nelson Place and (inaudible), and we lived on Sydney Place. My father didn't have enough income from the -- it was a very tough period -- from the extras he

got, waitings and stuff from the waiters' union, and the way he made it was to go into the exterminator business. He didn't die from this but he later had bladder cancer; I always suspected it was from that, but he didn't die from it. Dr. [Fedul] was very, extraordinarily, intensely careful, and he kept on inspecting; as new lesions came out he'd cut 'em out. So with his political connections -- I suspect, but maybe not -- he got a job as a supervisor in the Alms House, which is right off where (inaudible) is now, at the end of Newark, and he was like a small time supervisor of the workers there, some of the workers.

Q: What was the Alms House?

A: It was a place where if you were penniless you went, for all those people especially. It was a poorhouse. They called it the Alms House. They began this cultural change where we dress the reality up with fancy names. But he didn't want that, and he wanted a pension -- he was supposed to be independent, [it was kids] -- but most important, he wanted to guarantee [with a passion] that Phil and I went to college, so he lied on the entrance requirements. He said he had two years of college; he had two years of grammar school.



**END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A**

A: OK, so I'll try to remember what I said in the part that the tape missed. I left it when he went to the Alms House, but he wanted both --

Q: Yeah, but you did say about going to college.

A: So he studied and came first in the state for a competitive exam which, for the record, included many doctors who were out of work during the Depression, including drug inspectors license, and he came out first in the state. During this period, when he was a food and drug inspector, his thoughts congealed and he started a, for the Greeks, I mean, he founded and grew an organization which he labeled Greek/American Voters in Essex County, and he basically badgered his relatives, friends, people in church, the [kapanier], which I'll digress on, and they would come just to satisfy Gus Gevas. After a while, they got to see the benefits. Newark was full of Greek businessmen, small. My house was a parade, and I am not exaggerating -- it was before we had a phone -- was a parade of Greek businessmen, all of whom seemed to be in trouble at one time or another with the Health Department, and what was required was you had to talk to the judge. That's the setup into chemistry, which you can imagine.

Q: And at this time you were living where?

A: Nelson Place, because we only lived at Sydney Place for a short while, relative, just a few years. Also, Greeks had other problems. There was even a larger parade of people who wanted to be accompanied by somebody when they went down for their citizenship papers. When I saw parade a mean a parade, all the time! We were never short of wine at Easter time, because these people -- you know, my father wouldn't take any money or anything else, but, you know, you can't resist [throw somebody out]. They would bring wine or something; they were grateful. But there were other things where you needed access to the legal system, to the political system, and the lawyers could help like Gus Gevas could, and he helped them. And he really was -- he did it for ethnic reasons, (inaudible, Greek). He was a nice guy also, but his real motivation was that, I think. I know. I remember clearly my mother would be making the Greek goodies, baklava and all this stuff, and we had, he had receptions on Nelson Place, and you'd have blacks, Jews, whoever was in his district come in. I was too young to ask him "Is that why you got elected?" He probably would've said yeah, and probably correctly, 'cause there weren't that many Greeks.

Q: He ran for District --

A: And was elected. And at the elections, he would always be down at the [hall] records downstairs, you know, making sure that all the Greeks showed up and, you know, the Greeks didn't want to bother, and he dragged them down, except the ones who had a business. They were there because they had seen the benefit; also they were appreciative, but not all of them lived in our district. As I said, I have a copy of the letter, which I'll photocopy and mail to whichever of the two of you want it.

Q: (inaudible).

A: OK, when they send you these tapes I'll put it in the tape, where he was appointed or confirmed as... Oh, no, that's not his district! I got that wrong. That's the letter where he was appointed campaign manager in something like that in his [ward] for -- I think it was for Pierce Franklin.

Q: Whatever! I mean...

A: Yeah, 'cause I was getting ready to say, he was active Ward in his district -- he was actually active literally in the state but largely in Newark. He was also trying to push two Greek attorneys: one was Pappas, the son of the then priest

at St. Demetrius; the other was Lucille [Likitakus'] dad. I mean, both had done very well without --

Q: [Adonis], right?

A: [Adonis]. Both had done very... They didn't owe their career to him at all, but he felt that the Greeks should support people like that. You know, Mr. Adonis, Harold Adonis was a very bright man. My father thought he could be governor.

Q: He was gorgeous, too! (laughter)

A: I don't remember that. My father thought he could be governor if the Greeks got behind him, so when he got in trouble my father was very disappointed, because I remember my father saying, "(inaudible) governor," you know.

Q: But he --

A: Doesn't matter. I'm just saying, I'm talking now about my dad and Mr. Pappas. Now, even before that my brother's godfather was an attorney. He was disbarred because he had, for no reason, hidden the fact that he was born in Greece.

M: Which one was that?

A: I'm trying to remember his name.

M: Phil's godfather?

A: Phil's godfather. It'll come to me. Phil will remember, 'cause my brother remembers everything. John I think has a [photo] for recollections [by twin]. (laughter) He's got the clan quota, I got screwed! So anyway... That organization sponsored dances. It was effective, and it gave the Greeks a reach in municipal government and (inaudible). I was young, so I [ensure] -- and my father just didn't talk much about it -- so I only learned what was like in my face. A guy would come and knock on 61 Nelson Place and I would [be happy to] find out. He got a lot of people jobs, a lot of people jobs -- because I don't want to embarrass them I'm not going to say who they were -- with the City of Newark, a lot of people.

Q: Yeah, but we have to know who was involved!

A: Some names that would be... No, I can't do that.

Q: You can't, OK.

A: No. Some names, you'd be surprised. You'd be amazed.

Q: Jobs as what?

A: Menial jobs, but jobs. This was the Depression! And he, also he had, in addition to his character, he had the invulnerability (inaudible). He didn't need that. Now, he had ambitions and he had the vision for a larger reach with the Greek political activities. He never got to it, and he

was even active in it when I was out of college. I remember he called, there was a meeting -- I don't know if they'll remember this. [Jimmy Katakis] would, he was there, and Peter Adams was there, an attorney. That's a very -- I think it was, I know it was at a hotel. No, I don't know. I'm 99% sure it was at a hotel. And there were some politicians who were brought in. So Pop was doing this for a long time. Now, neither Mr. Adams nor Jim -- Jim was just there to help Pop, but he didn't help these guys; that was at the end. Nor did they need it; they were both successful. I'm just saying, that marks an era, the end of the era. An interesting story is one of the enforcers of the mafia, early in this, in my lifetime, but not so early that my father couldn't tell me, was a Greek, George something. My father said that George was a very good guy. My father felt fatherly to him; I don't remember this guy's last name. And this guy apparently really respected my father! (laughter) But he liked to fight. My father says, you know, just liked to fight, and he was very good at it, and he was fearless, which is another way of saying stupid, because what he did, even though he's a bouncer, a couple -- I think it was a couple, I know it was at least one -- of the top gun mafia toughies said something or did something to this Greek, George something, which George didn't like,

and on Broad Street he wiped the street up with him. So they killed him! (laughter) [So I'm] laughing! So they killed him, they shot him! So even the -- my father felt very bad --

M: Now what year is this? The '40s?

A: I would guess. I was born in 1929. It must've been early '40s or very late '30s.

M: Of course, we can check it out with the newspapers.

A: Early '40s, late '30s. George was the guy's first name.

M: OK, we might be able to check it out.

A: So he was shot and killed, this guy, and, you know, the Greeks had very few run-ins with the law, and my father was kind of a purist who normally would have been not too sympathetic, but this guy got under my father's defense, so my father really liked him. He used to say (inaudible, Greek), you know, "He's all screwed up." He could not have been too bright to have done what he did. They shot him! And apparently my father was known by these hoods because -- oh, here's another story -- my father was, you know, a tough guy, and he told this story... He had the first ward as his food inspector's area, so there was a fight, apparently, near the (inaudible) on the railroad where one of the -- I don't know how high in the mafia -- chieftains hung out; it

was his bar, and he had food. So my father went in there, and the guy running the place gave my father lip, which my father, with my father that was the wrong thing to do, and the guy was coming around -- my father was already an older guy, which [you wouldn't have thought of my] father, but I'm sure the guy would have murdered. But sitting in that place was like the real big mafia, relative to the guy that was running the store, the bar. So I remember my father was really (inaudible), said, "If you touch that Greek I'll shoot you!" (laughter)

M: (inaudible)

A: (inaudible). But so they knew Dad. And you know, after we moved up here I used to go down and buy Italian bread in the first ward. They didn't want to take money from me, so I stopped going! And then there were two sisters, until recently -- they've just been boarded up -- when you access 280 by the Colonnades, on the left (inaudible) got bars in front of it, they would take money (inaudible), but on Seventh Avenue they [didn't take money], I don't go there. They took the money, and they said that -- they would tell me how wonderful my father was, and he was the only food and drug inspector, food inspector -- (inaudible) drug -- who never took money, who always insisted on paying for what he



took. Pop was a guy that, you know, I'm proud of. But they remembered, and there were these little anecdotes that probably I've forgotten, I'm sure I've forgotten. So the Greek story at that time... Let me go back. The Greeks -- I can give you names of places that I remember. The central restaurant was very important. I don't know who ran it, but every darn Greek I knew worked there of this old generation, that I knew, had worked there, except my father; he had not worked there but he was buddies with the owners.

Q: Was it Maskaleris'?

A: Maskaleris had a different restaurant.

Q: Presto.

A: They had the Presto. That was important. The Modus' were important. I forgot what they called their --

M: Park Restaurant.

A: Park, right.

M: On Broad Street.

A: Good. Now, there was a place next to the... Was it the Little Movie? Right around --

Q: The Little Theater? That had porno movies (laughter) at one time?

A: Well, it initially was not porno. It was a different era; porno came later. But there was a place like -- what do they call these places where you go in...? It's even more mechanical than --

M: Like a (inaudible).

A: Yeah. And then there was also another restaurant that people who can remember Sparta, Greece, from Sparta were... A lot of Greeks worked there. Those were the largest of them that I recall. Yes, (inaudible).

F: I just wanted to say, when can you have an intermission for lunch?

(break in audio)

A: Oh, yeah, I was mentioning the Greek places, 'cause I wanted to give you names but you already have them. I forgot a very important one: my uncle's, where I worked. In terms of the major stores -- there were many small ones -- it was (inaudible).

M: (inaudible) percent of restaurants [making higher].

A: There was a restaurant every other door and they were all making money! The United (inaudible) Restaurant on 555 Broad Street, where I worked and where my uncle Angelo worked... (phone ring) Leave it, Lydia! The answering service will get it, the answering machine! Well, she'll do

what she ways. Oh, that's a fax. No, no, forget it, no problem. It's probably Phil. I can tell because our fax machine goes on after two buzzes, and at this hour of the day it's usually Phil. So anyway, the (inaudible) Restaurant had a -- when I say important I mean it was a large number of employees, and the Greeks cycle through -- they go learn the business and then start their own business. Some small restaurants, like Mr. [Menorikus], Nick [Menorikus] did, Peter [Menorikus] were the majority -- and your dad's, I forgot what he called it...

Q: [Boston] Candy Company.

A: But he was out of the downtown area.

Q: No, he was at --

A: Yeah, I know very well where it was. I think of him every time I pass that way, which is not often now. On Broad Street is where you had the larger establishment, where you had a lot of [throughput]. You also had a lot of places where, like your dad, which was not small -- it was basically run with four or five employees; these other places had 30, so there were more, 'cause they had shifts. Your dad's place, the --

M: Philadelphia.

A: -- Philadelphia, where I worked also, was a medium-level place. It was larger than your dad's, smaller than the United (inaudible) Restaurant, and the only reason I didn't mention it -- it was large enough to mention, though, because the criteria, this throughput of people that worked there. Now, there were a fair number of grocery type businesses, also, very small. Mr. [Sumas] started off on [Warren] Street. I think it was there that he started. It was [Sumas] -- I don't know if it was him or his relatives, 'cause they owned half of 61 where we lived.

M: It was relatives.

A: Relatives? But I know he started down there someplace.

M: He started, he went up to South Orange --

A: Yeah, but that's when he had already started. (inaudible) was in Newark. So as I recall, the occupations of the Greeks, when I was a kid -- and by that I mean six, seven, really early -- the occupations of the Greeks were... If I had to make a wild guess, unsupported by any real arithmetic review, which would be impossible, I would guess that at least half and maybe more worked in some capacity in the food business, and only about -- it's a very small number -- only about 10% worked in factories. They just did not work in factories. And my guess would be that of those who

worked in the food business, 70% or more ended up with their own business. It was a stunningly high percentage of entrepreneurship. My guess is that at least a quarter of them were partnerships with relatives or [patriarki], which is a window into the Greek psyche. It was family and the village you came from, and if you couldn't manage the village then it was the region. They were not very universal in that sense.

M: What about the [Kapanea]? Do you remember --

A: I'm saving that. Oh, I know a lot about the [Kapanea]!

M: You got 15 minutes!

Q: No, that's OK. No, we have other -- we'll do it after lunch, too.

A: I want to hit the economics first. I was the first Greek-American on Nelson Place to go to college, and there's a reason for that. The generation before me, in the large, had gone into the Service. I was -- and I got out of high school early, so that helped in terms of the timing. I was in the front wave of the post-military service group, and that was a sharp dividing line. Now... (pause) At that same time, the GI Bill began to click in, but those who were clicking in when I went... See, I started Stevens in 1946, and it turned out that the veterans who started in '46 that

early, who must have been wounded and got out early, they didn't live on Nelson Place. I'm sure; I've never checked. There must have been thousands in the country, but on Nelson Place I was part of a new wave, not of immigrants but of Greeks, Greek kids. The ones who were three years older than me all served, and maybe one year older was...

M: Well, some went to school, I recall. [Katsamalis], (inaudible), there's some not at Nelson Place but --

A: I said Nelson Place. Nelson Place had a lot of Greek kids. I said there were thousands in the country.

M: You would know. Yeah, just Nelson Place, you're right.

A: I know, I'm sure. I said also that there were thousands in the country, but on Nelson, but given the number of kids that lived on Nelson Place, that is a marker of the GI Bill and military service. It was a defining milestone. Now, people who were... There was a whole -- the generation before us, like Tom (inaudible), an attorney, obviously went to college, (inaudible). They weren't on Nelson Place. The generation born in the early '20s in this country either went to college on the GI Bill or, more often, never went to college, and that included some very bright people. The generation born -- I was born in '29, but say roughly 1930 and on -- had a terrific rate of going to college. Let me

interject also, like (inaudible) said, of course, at that time they were not going to college. It was just high school. They didn't have the money. They didn't have the money.

M: Money was one factor, and I think the other thing is that, you know, you just went to work.

A: Yeah, the reason is you didn't have any money!

Q: 'Cause they didn't have the money! See, my mother felt the most important thing for us was education.

M: You're a different era.

A: They didn't have the money.

Q: They didn't have the money, that's why they... (inaudible) said that.

A: I know they didn't have the money, and I know... Because what happened was, once -- and this is going to be my concluding point -- by 1946 and so on, the average income of the Greeks had increased. My generation didn't have a GI Bill, but their parents had the money to send them, so it is a very important milestone, in my view of looking broadly at the Greek economic system. Now, just to conclude what the Greeks were doing for a living, the combination of more -- I mean, none of us were affluent; [Pete's] family and your family were both more affluent than mine, but even mine had

enough to send to college. So the combination of that improved economic standing and the GI Bill marked -- to use the word 'profound' where it really applies -- a really profound branch point in what the Greeks did for a living, because of college. It also marked the change, slow in the beginning, where most of the Greek businesses were. In the '50s, you began to see a decline, for two reasons, in the number of Greek restaurants downtown, because the suburbs, the automobile caused a gradual change in Newark, so the core of Newark and the outskirts -- because this is a story you're writing about Newark -- began to change, and many of the Greeks who had businesses, many actually initially, in Newark ended up with businesses out of Newark. So the demographics of Newark Greeks also began to change, because when I was a kid you just didn't see old people. There were very few old people; there were some, but they were rare, and there were very few funerals. But by the time -- very few -- but by the time... A lot of weddings, a lot of baptisms, very few funerals. By the time I went to college there were more funerals, et cetera, and the age mix changed. That was very important in Greek life. Now, [kapanier], very important subject.

Q: I just want to make sure that it's still going and we have enough...



M: We're OK, we're OK.

Q: You sure?

M: Yeah.

Q: Wait a minute.

M: We're OK!

Q: No, we're not! It's almost at the end.

M: It's still moving!

Q: I know it's moving but it's almost at the end.

M: Keep talking, I'll tell you when to stop!

Q: OK. When my father first came to Newark there were a zillion [kapanier], and there were different -- they had almost, to use a fancy word, different algorithms for their charter: the gamblers, the single men, the married men, the people from location A, B, C, D, E in Greece. They all had their favorite... People violated these algorithms, but in the large also where you lived, so these guys had no car, and they're all over the place.

M: How many were there?

A: I don't know. I would dearly love to know.

M: We identified four.

A: Oh, that's not...

M: More?

A: Oh! Forget it! That'll be lost forever. That is lost forever. Now...

**END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B**

A: OK, [kapanier]... One of the interesting things is that these Greek immigrants... I hadn't realized that actually until I met Maria, who was an outsider and saw it from the outside, and one of the first things that she noticed was these immigrants came here in the early teens, most of them, and what's fascinating and a tremendously incisive window into the Greek way of that era, was that even in the early teens, most of whom had not had a complete history of living with their parents, brought together with them the whole Greek culture. If you took a Greek, if you did from Greece and brought him here, he remained Greek. If you took -- and this is no disparagement --

(break in audio; sound effect)

A: -- in the village setting, the social gathering place, so the reason there were so many was that they just carried that along with the other, the baggage, in the good sense, of their culture. And they were all over -- unfortunately, I can't estimate the number, but I know they were very numerous. I'd forgotten where they were, but I remember

being startled at where they were. One little sideline, which again is revealing: There was a Greek war relief drive to create money for Greece. I had the highest canister going, collection, and I'll explain how. There was a very pretty girl who I had a secret crush on -- she was a little older, and she was pretty enough that I had a crush on her -- who went to St. Demetrius. I remember she had large, dark eyes, beautiful, nice woman, girl, who also, probably because she was so pretty, collected a lot of money. I [stomped] her, because I understood the [kapanier]. I went to the [kapanier] on Plain Street -- I had gotten a lot of money, 'cause I used to sell shopping bags, and I knew, you know, stuff like that -- but I went to the [kapanier] when I was done. I wanted to gather a lot of money, and I was [swamped] by the Greeks in the [kapanier]. It was a gathering place. Now, about the [kapanier]: I mentioned that there were different [kapaniers] that catered to different interests and make-ups. The [kapanier] I went to was one my father went to. It was illustrative of the [kapanier] of that era; this is now immediately post-war World War II, but it was true prior to that. During the day there were like [Constantine BG], married men, after their job, before they went home to the boss, they'd play (inaudible, Greek), which was the favorite Greek -- I don't

know what the hell it is but it's called [treppa] -- card game, no money. They'd buy a few cups of coffee and then they'd come home. At night, the bachelors were gambling; two different worlds, same locale. I'm sorry?

M: Go ahead, Jim.

A: OK. So I went there, and I went there in the afternoon, late afternoon. Even though I was, being a brilliant guy, which I was from birth, I knew that you should go there when people like my father -- though he wasn't there when I went, for some reason -- he was always there, you know, when he could, the late afternoon. The place was packed, and I had the Greek war relief canister. So that gives a window into the [kapanier]. Other [kapanier] only opened at night and they were strictly gambling, but they were not part of the mafia or anything like that. That was an indigenous Greek thing, as far as I know. If there were any, I didn't know about it. And as the Greek population began to gradually move away from downtown, the number of [kapanier] dropped. There were two centers of Greek life besides the church. One was the [kapanier] -- really three. The second was a (inaudible, Greek) who sold newspapers. He was a very interesting man. The old (inaudible, Greek) and the successor. The old (inaudible, Greek) was one of the few

Greeks who was educated. How educated, I don't know, but I remember that my father respected him and they would talk about Greek politics and a lot of this stuff. He sold the stuff which (inaudible) now sells for baptisms, but also the Greek papers.

Q: And records.

A: All of it, records, right. And to its right was a Boulevard Bar and Grill. The second floor of the Boulevard Bar and Grill -- and I'm saying (inaudible) separate treatment -- was, I guess you'd call it a large room, small ballroom where a [haifa] would have monthly meetings, for example, which I'll get to separately, and Greeks would go there. My father did not go there, other than to get (inaudible) for St. Nicholas or Parnassus, which is -- just a couple more things to cover -- ethnic organizations.

Q: Important.

A: The Boulevard Bar and Grill was very important to a category, a slice of the Greek population, not to people like you or your fathers -- they had to be in their business all day long -- but the others of their peers who had some free time, who liked a drink, would go there. My father was not a drinker, so he didn't go there. He drank wine at home. But a lot of them did, (inaudible) drunkards. Those

who didn't want to play cards went to the Boulevard Bar and Grill on Plain Street. It was very important. Now...

Q: Was it owned by a Greek?

A: Oh, yeah. Upstairs was a ballroom, which (inaudible) when I now go to my next thing, 'cause Pete's got to get out of here, which will be (inaudible)... There was a competition in the early part of that year between GAPA, G-A-P-A, Greek American Progressive Association, and a [haifa]. They were distinguished. The distinguishing different was GAPA -- I'm ashamed to say I would've joined to it, being an [addict], even though my Greek is terrible -- had all of their proceedings in Greek, all of them, because they wanted to remain Greek in this foreign city. I [haifa], which had the same ethnic pride, had everything in English. The national attrition favored a [haifa]. GAPA died an honorable death somewhere around -- and you'll need more authenticity than I can afford -- somewhere around the end of World War II.

Q: Yeah. I think some of it still exists in other areas, in New York.

A: That's interesting. I didn't know that. That's very interesting.

Q: And I have a booklet from GAPA that my mother had saved. They had a dance, and they had everything in English, and

not only that but it was the kind of booklet that -- they had a show, American dances, and... I'll have to show it to you sometime.

A: I'd love to see that. I remember my father saluting GAPA because -- I'm super-paraphrasing -- he says, "I have the same soul they do but I have a different view how to get here," like our disagreement, [education], the same soul but we differ on how to get there. So there was a competition, honorable competition in the Greek community for about 30 years between GAPA and [haifa], and [haifa] won.

(break in audio; sound effect)

A: (inaudible). And we used to meet across the street, when I joined we used to meet across the street from St. Nicholas, and it was (inaudible) -- I think it was (inaudible), one of those type of things. They had hardwood railings, I mean, mahogany it looked like. I don't know what it was.

(break in audio; sound effect)

A: -- tremendous window into the Greek psyche. We are weird.

Q: I know!

A: Phil is right, there's too much inbreeding! (laughter) So it's a fascinating thing as I look back at those years, and, you know, I would always be embarrassed --

(break in audio; sound effect)

A: -- talking a lot. I hope he wouldn't screw up. He never did. But you know, I remember as a new [haifa], my father, to the end of his days, was always a loud voice -- I'm proud to say a logical voice -- in the [haifa]. But it was that kind of a turbulent thing, very Greek. Very important in the life of Newark. It happens throughout the country, started most of them in churches. They tended to be the progressive, aggressive leadership types, plus followers, but those who created a [haifa], which is a different story, were that kind. So a [haifa] would have a monthly -- now, I was a kid then, I just heard this from my father -- would have a monthly social on top of the (inaudible, mumbling), would have a monthly social on the second floor of the Boulevard Bar and Grill. The father of Mrs. [Kritedes], the dentist [Kritedes], would play the clarinet.

Q: My goodness!

A: Yeah. And they would dance and sing Greek. A [haifa] met twice a week, twice a month. When I joined we went twice a month. I think my father would've castrated me if I didn't show up, plus I drove him there after (inaudible) car, after a year out of college. And that was across the street from St. Nicholas. And when they had dances, there were



(inaudible), because a lot of Greeks who couldn't go to those things (inaudible). Most of them -- my father told me... It was only one village. That aspect of the Greek life was very important for marriages, because huge number of Greek-American marriages were, you know, [followed to that], even more than church, where they can rub up against the girl. (laughter) So what happened -- that's why [he liked this, right] -- so what happened was --

Q: It's not exactly expressed that way all the time, (laughter) but anyway, go ahead!

A: But what happened was...

M: You also had the Daughters of Penelope, too.

A: I'm coming to that. Before, exactly before that -- I'll come to that -- that was before there was a (inaudible). So the youth subsidiaries of a [haifa], more than the women, more than Daughters of Penelope -- because a mother's, you know, they were like our parents, they were taking care of the house -- the [Maids] of Athens and the Sons of Perecles were active. By the time I became President of Eureka chapter, 6162, I had to reinstate --

(break in audio; sound effect)

A: -- to survive because of World War II, and the gradual change that was taking place --

Q: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) college?

A: (inaudible). They're moving [suburbs], yeah, which comes to the next thing. I think that the largest single factor in the change in the Greek-American society was not the melting point, it was the automobile, because -- I'm talking about intermarriage -- nowadays it's something else, but then it was not that. Then it was the automobile, because... These are all my unsubstantiated -- if you're asking for opinions, that's my opinion.

Q: That's what we want to hear.

A: Right. My opinion is that when the Greeks left the core, I mean geographic core, then all the other chemistry could work, and did work. Now, a [haifa] remained a, it remains today but it remained at its, in our area as well as nationally, it remained a prominent factor in Greek community life in Newark through the '60s. It didn't begin to slip until after that. As I said, when I became President in '61-62, I had to re... In fact, that's when you came into the Daughters, I think, was shortly after. I forget.

Q: Yeah, I...

A: I forget when, but you would know better, you can add more facts than I came about the Daughters, but I remember the

first President was Mary [Karanosis] when I reinstated, not (inaudible) reinstated. So the fact that it needed to be reinstated shows that World War II was already over, over a decade, things were changing -- which I think was the automobile. So the frequency and the number of affairs attributable to the (inaudible) society -- which is my final big subject -- had already begun to change. When the Greeks first came here, as I said much earlier, I think, their world, their universe was family and [korio], their native village, and... Like, for example, my father's village is very small, even by Greek standards. I asked my uncle [Spirogi] -- this was, of course, that's passed away -- a question I had forgotten to ask my dad, who had already passed away: How many came from (inaudible, Greek), which is the non-official name of (inaudible), which is the official name. How many... What's the (inaudible) --

Q: That's one of the things we're going to, you know, on a map show.

A: '71 -- holy Christ, who was left?

Q: Nobody, practically.

A: What happened is they went to Newark, like my Dad went to Mr. Argyris' house, he came to Newark, and all the people from (inaudible) came here, most of them. So --

Q: Because there were relatives of theirs here or villagers of the same village here.

A: Right.

Q: That's why they came here.

A: Right. So it helped, 'cause remember, Kiki, they were teenagers, early teens most of them.

Q: Right. Did the Greeks help each other?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: And a lot of people that we've talked to felt that they did not.

A: They're ignorant.

M: Other than families, they say.

A: No, they're profoundly ignorant. What they're saying is, and what is absolutely true is, once these guys got on their feet they competed. Relatives competed. I will not name the name, but a supreme example, which was never forgiven -- 'cause these guys were competitors -- a guy opened a diner. Physically, a wall between them, another diner opened next to them, adjacent. They never spoke again. (laughter) So they competed, were jealous --

M: Yeah, that's what we were coming up with, jealousy.

A: But --

Q: They weren't like the (inaudible); the (inaudible) would help somebody out --

A: No, they were the opposite. My father -- and I said I'm going to speak my opinion -- my father was an exception to that 'cause he had a nationalistic [hold thing]. He was not the only one, but he was one of the few exceptions. So what happened was these (inaudible, Greek), these village-based organizations continued. Interestingly enough, my father still continued. I'm a member of Parnassus Society. We get together once a year, usually now down in [Asbury Park]. We are the only legally... No, we are the first in the United States, of any ethnicity, we are the first ethnically chartered corporation, and we're a tiny place! They make fun of the name of some Greek movie about 20 years ago. My father wanted to --

Q: Now, where did they get the name, Parnassus?

A: Parnassus is a mountain.

Q: Oh, OK. This had nothing to do with Parnassus in New York.

A: No. It had this to do, Kiki: Parnassus the mountain was the origin of both names. The Parnassus Society... So, typical of Greek humility, this tiny village, which was even by Greek standards a tiny fraction of the population on the mountain saying the whole mountain for their name.

(laughter) I never had the guts to ask my father, "Where'd you get that kind of nerve?"

Q: I wish we had asked our fathers a lot more questions.

A: Yeah. One other thing I'm going to say about -- and I don't want this in the book but I want you to understand. This is my next point. I want you to understand the... Though probably you don't have to, you probably learned it all anyway. (inaudible). The Greek father had a very complete patriarchal standing in his family.

(break in audio; sound effect)

A: My father was the absolute king of the family. He was king, (inaudible) king, and yet -- you know, it was a very interesting thing. I was his son. He was proud of it. I got out of college very early. Most fathers would say, "Man, this guy's pretty smart. I'm proud of him." He never told me he was proud of me, never did any of that stuff. We didn't kiss each other like all these people do. I graduated college in 1950, a month or so later Korean War had started. Nobody would hire -- I was 20 years old. Who the hell is going to hire a 20-year-old engineer who was going to get drafted? I couldn't get a job. I finally got one where they gave up, and I got a job in September. [Siemens] at that time was a top school.

Q: Right, still is.

A: OK, and, you know, I had grades and all that. So I had been working at my uncle's restaurant, the (inaudible) Restaurant, during summers, so I went down with my father just on a social visit and my uncle was there. He was saying (inaudible). And there was this Jewish guy [counter] worked at night -- I used to work with him -- who wasn't going to show up. We used to call him [Stein]. (inaudible). He says, "Jim, (inaudible)" -- I forgot his name -- "could you come down," and I hesitated.

(break in audio; sound effect)

A: He said, "You had an offer of work and you're not working?!" It was a principle! My father didn't care about the money.

Q: I understand.

A: And I know he was super proud of me. He taught me lessons which I still remember. That kind of family authority, with a love which I can only call infinite, to me -- and the reason I tell you this which is personal and you're not allowed to put it in the book -- if you can convey this in the book, together with the mothers who had the same... I remember my mother telling me a parable where this -- I'm making the details up but not the essence, 'cause I don't

remember the details -- this guy had [this offspring], and disemboweled his mother or something.

Q: No.

A: Really? Her eyes were left.

Q: No, no...

A: Oh, I know the different one.

Q: The mother's got (inaudible) the gift to his fiancée or his wife, and she goes, and he trips while he's carrying it, and she says, "Did you hurt yourself, my son?"

A: No, no, no. They probably come from the same source --

Q: Same source, but a different version.

A: But she expressed her love to him, and she explained to me that this was something she had been taught at Sparta. Maybe it is the same. Maybe I'm just remembering it wrong.

M: Something about putting a wolf in the --

A: No.

M: That's another story.

Q: Yeah, go ahead.

A: But the devotion of the mother --

Q: That's right.



A: -- the devotion of the mother and the loving authority of the father is something very difficult to include in your book, but if you can include that you've captured the heart of that era. I do not see it in this era. There's one other thing I'd like to point out about the Greeks, and we're probably out of time --

M: No, no, no, 'cause I want to ask you... Go ahead. I want to ask you a question.

A: Okay. One other thing that I find interesting -- by the time I reached my twenties and thirties, I was lucky enough to have both parents. And they tell you things which -- and they also say things in front of you which they didn't --

Q: That's right. (laughter)

A: -- in the general category of [gossip], I learned more negatives about our relatives and acquaintances in one year when I was 32 -- I'm making that number up -- then I learned in a lifetime before that. And what was interesting to me -- because I was in both cultures, like, everybody including Marie is here, we understand the American and the Greek. What fascinated me at that time, and remains, is I see it's changed now -- was that in those days when you had a family function, a baptism, a wedding, anything, (inaudible) whether you hated or loved them, [you'd go] (inaudible)

you're 99<sup>th</sup> cousin was there. Now, the [wedding] you just told me about is an example [that's] different than this. [Pete, you know me] (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) but the point is -- the primacy in these people put blood first. Second was [Greek phrase] and all that stuff. Third was friendship and [foryok]. They had a hierarchy, but a lot of things were in the [core]. Then came -- then, not before -- then came your friends. You might have hated your cousin, the son of a bitch, you couldn't stand him, but he'd going to be at the baptism or whatever. Now as -- but for your part, which was very much [determinative] of feelings of actions then -- I'll illustrate with a much later example. I had met an uncle of [Nick Cheevis] who you know, of course, and you don't know -- maybe know -- [when we're going] to Greece together, one of my trips to Greece was with Nick Cheevis and [Nick Leonardi] -- or, Nick [Karanassus]. Went to this home, and this guy who -- guy -- a very intelligent man (inaudible) my father's [area] and he was very solicitous of us, so when they came to this country as tourists, I was married. We invited them here.

**END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A**

A: (inaudible) when I can go.

M: Go.

A: Okay. He was -- he liked Marie. He had very poor taste, he liked her. And it -- you know -- respected her and all that. He really did. And you have to understand -- believe that because what I'm going to say. It was [edited] to me. He said, intending to pay her a compliment -- I'm paraphrasing -- she's pretty nice or pretty good, whatever he said in Greek, even though she's not from [Rubidi] (Greek phrase). So to understand the Greeks and how the system worked in those early years, you have to know that this was a very real thing. It was unconscious. People who were otherwise civilized, you know, felt this way. Now [let me get] the closure, let me make sure, 'cause, you know, I don't have this written down. Oh, church. This is a story which -- I like to give both sides, anything I say. [Mary Dimandis] disputes -- you can check her with a different view, and I doubt that you want to put this in the book, but [I'll do] this more out of respect to your persons than -- I don't think you want to put this in the book. I -- there's no question in my mind that this is accurate. The reason St. Demetrius came to be is the people from [Savos], which is Mary's -- at least father, but I think both parents come from -- [there's a following]. They had a [saints day] that [their iaen] celebrated. Father [Spiridakis] didn't accept things that degraded the dignity of the church.

Q: The church.

A: And they -- following what they did in their home island came in with the band and flags [and what -- they] come into the liturgy. He threw 'em out. I don't know how delicately or indelicate --

Q: He was not delicate. I don't know if this -- there are many ways that he was not delicate.

A: And my father says -- who was very much enmeshed and involved with the Greeks generally -- he said -- he -- well, in his mind there was no doubt. That led to a sequence of other things.

Q: Right.

A: Now the clergy in -- Father [Spiridakis], something should be said about him if you're talking about -- [and with this, I think I close]. I waited for him [for the last, but] he was the glue in a lot of ways. Father Spiridakis was educated -- you may have heard this from --

Q: You know who told us about Father Spiridakis? Father [Kistakis], but we need to know more --

A: Okay.

Q: -- from your perspective.

A: Okay. My perspective is the following. I learned some from

my father, who was (inaudible) St. Nicholas, on the board and other things. But I had a very interesting insight into him because I taught Sunday school in two different eras -- about eight years in the '50s and a couple years [whatever the] -- twenty years later with Maria. First time, [John Pappajan] had been running the Sunday school. When John left, before [Kallelas] came or -- yeah, before Kallelas came -- I should say -- yeah, well, he's not a priest, so I can quote Kallelas -- Father Spiridakis took over the Sunday school, so we'd meet him once a week. And I got to know Father much better than I ever knew him. I am in something close to awe of him, and I am an expert on his limitations, which are not the point here. But his strengths are just monumental. For instance, to his intellect and that stuff -- he was super bright. I'm using the word in the dictionary sense. He understood so much more [of] this community than they'll ever know. He had been educated in a monastery in Egypt. He was born and raised in Crete, which at that time -- I later checked -- then was one of the educational lights of orthotics before they threw the Greeks out in --

Q: Right.

A: He had the -- he was very devout, which surprised me. For

example, when my mother lost her vision in both eyes and then she had -- for a while, [she couldn't do] -- she was completely blind, she told him she had a dream of -- what was the saint?

F: [Yako Shivi].

A: Yako Shivi. And he told to -- she said that to Father after she got -- regained her sight. Spiridakis, he began to cry, you know. These are things [the Father -- nobody] would think, [in the end], because he --

Q: Because you saw him as a disciplinarian --

A: Right.

Q: -- as an authoritarian figure.

A: But he was crying. So Father would have been a big success as a corporate CEO. But he was a priest with people whose educational distance from his own was gigantic. But he understood the Greeks, in addition to which he was an elitist. He really was. But he loved the masses at the same time. The two are not exclusive. But each aspect of him alienated some, attracted others. But what he did that's (inaudible) but what he did during his tenure when he was the -- especially when he was the only Greek priest in New Jersey --

Q: [And that's what we need].

A: -- was he traveled all over the state -- some of this I got -- my father, some my -- with great effort got out of him, but especially my father on this. Somebody died in Trenton, he got in his rattletrap car and drove there. Somebody's in the hospital there, somebody's baptism there, married here -- and Greeks would get married not in churches. There was only one church in New Jersey. Who the hell had a car? [Even] if it was just you and the bride -- you know, is your best man going to get on a [gibooti] to get to you, etcetera. He is a genuinely unsung hero, and I hope your book pays homage to him.

Q: But we have to know about it.

A: Well, you should understand -- the dimensions of what he did in a very simple way that just occurred to me since you asked that question, which is a smart question, even though it came from you, a female -- (laughter)

Q: I have this on tape.

\_\_: Hurry up! Hurry up!

A: Find out what you can get from that [denizen] of incompetence called the archdiocese. Find out when the different parishes of Saint -- of New Jersey were chartered, [so] -- and understand that before that --

F: [You had] --

Q: He did it all.

A: Yeah.

M: [We have that in the article]. We --

A: Okay.

M: -- touched on that.

A: Don't touch on it. Expand it.

M: [Well] --

A: No, let me finish. Whatever you have, you have. Let me tell you what I'm giving you. Get a perspective which you then put -- my opinion -- which you then project honestly on what the guy did. You don't need me to explain (inaudible) archdiocese, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: So then -- the other thing that was interesting about Father -- not for the book -- his son married a Jew.

Q: Oh yeah, that's right.

A: After he -- his son married a Jew, he'd get up Sundays and rail, "Only marry a Greek!" You know, that was his sermon. Not Jesus Christ on the Mount or something. You only marry a Greek. He was -- I'm going to give you two anecdotes about him and you can use this in a book if you felt like it. [Pete Polinius] doesn't remember. I'd say Pete, I



says, "You're goddamn senile," because this was so emotional -- and he loved the story, but he doesn't remember. Pete and I -- I tell Pete that he was ashamed to say that he was that involved in the church. Pete and I were helping Father clean the sidewalk during Holy Week. Father (inaudible) respect and genuine love for Father [Lucas]. Father Spiridakis did things to --

Q: Did everything.

A: -- he used [to tell a story with his kids -- but] (inaudible) that's right --

M: [In the furnace]? (inaudible)

A: So Father was out there with Pete Polinius and me. I don't know how the hell we got there --

M: (inaudible)

A: No, it was for Holy Week.

M: Oh, for Holy Week, oh.

A: Sweeping.

M: Sweeping.

A: Father had a hose -- I guess Pete and I were sweeping, Pete Polinius. And a couple -- and they happened to be black, but they could have been anything. Two or three of them came -- (laughter)

M: Oh God.

Q: Any story that --

A: And here we go -- [so listen, you guys], you're not stupid.  
(laughter) [Two of them came and they did] something which  
I don't remember. But it was disrespectful.

M: Did he hose 'em down?

A: [And hostile]. And Father starts chasing them with the  
hose. (laughter) Another example of Christian fellowship,  
a guy -- he used to -- Father used to park by the fire  
hydrant on -- and I forgot the name of the street. I am  
senile. That --

M: Mercer Street.

A: Mercer?

M: (inaudible)

A: Quit bragging. (laughs)

M: (inaudible) Mercer Street.

A: Thank you. There was a fire hydrant --

M: Right.

A: -- right at the corner. So Father used to park right behind  
it, and some guy parked by the hydrant and -- (laughs)

M: [What do you think]?

A: I'm not exaggerating! I don't have to!

M: Moved the car?

A: [I don't know how] he moved the car. Somebody penned Father in and he couldn't get out.

M: [Is that right]?

A: [Leaps into the car] --

M: (inaudible)

A: -- bam! [Oh, no, no] -- bam! Bam! (laughter) Bam! Bam!

Q: [And sends the] car down High Street?

A: No, he didn't send -- he bangs it, he rocketed it, he impacted it into -- listen, that's not enough -- into the middle of High Street (laughs) not enough so that he could get out, but into the Middle, and then he pulls out and leaves. (laughter) And neither side goes -- either direction of High Street -- they sort of inched around it [either way, and] he's gone!

M: [What a terror]!

A: Now this is a story I got from (inaudible)

M: Let me ask you a question. I'm going to ask you --

A: No, that story I got -- I'll give you --

M: Okay.

A: -- another one about him.

M: Because you've touched on a lot of things which is great. I mean, Dad, Mom and the organization (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) I want to ask -- and I think this is what [Kiki and I] are looking for -- the flavor of the neighborhood growing up in that time, okay, what was it like -- a typical holiday, [name] day --

A: Okay, let me talk about that.

M: -- religious days --

A: [I got to] --

M: -- okay?

Q: Can I say something? Why don't we leave this -- and Jim?

M: No, let him continue. We got time.

A: Yeah. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

Q: As you remember things --

A: [Let me go on about] what Pete said --

Q: (inaudible)

A: -- but to finish real quick on Father Spiridakis --

Q: I'd like to hear that.

A: I think it was Philadelphia some place -- I don't know if it's Father Spiridakis' daughter --

Q: Marika.

A: -- Marika or Tom or both -- they told me he was getting feeble so they told him, "Wait a minute, Father" -- it's on a busy street, and one of the two of them or both of them went in and they bought a cane and they gave him a cane --

Q: [Did he hit 'em over the head]?

A: -- he looked at the cane and he threw [it into the middle of the street].

M: Is that right? (laughter)

A: Yeah! And the cars are going, you know --

M: Do you want to continue or you want us to leave?

A: No, I want to continue.

M: Okay. Talk about the --

A: Yeah, I'm going to do the -- [I'll go to] what you said. We called everybody Theo and Thea whether or not we were related. And if you did something -- if you were either in trouble or you did something wrong, you can bet your last nickel that your parents were going to hear about it, even if you don't know who the hell they were, they knew who you were. Everybody really worried about everybody else. When my mother was blind because she had lost one -- cataract -- one bad retina and the other one was clouded with a cataract

-- lots of help. Well, the main help was Mrs. [Dokus], who came to our house all the time, because they were like sisters. What you told me today is interesting (inaudible) between [the two of us].

M: Right.

A: It was one genuine spiritual entity, that neighborhood, at the same time that there was lots of [animus], because they were Greek. But if somebody had a problem -- I explained my father's role, but there were other roles. They helped each other. And everybody felt that they owned you if you were a kid. (laughter) You know, including hitting you -- [of the] adults. And the -- a little example. I remember walking behind Mr. [Stakus] who had a barbershop on West Market. [I] (inaudible) my father [is from Ruminee], and I'd walk behind him slow. My brother (inaudible) he remembers it, but with my zero memory I can't. I just enjoy them. I'd walk behind -- imagine this on the street in contemporary USA. I'd walk very slow, because he'd walk slow. He's singing [Kolektika] because he's a [Ruminyorki] to himself -- I'm not exaggerating (inaudible) he'd be walking -- (sings in Greek), you know. And I'd be behind him -- I must have looked like I was a queer trying to, you know (laughter; inaudible) and I'd be trying to catch the

words, and I didn't want to disturb him, and it was disrespectful. God knows what it looked like, but I was an A-hole anyway. You know, I didn't care. (laughs) It was [so] -- you know, the blind leading --

Q: They were all Greeks in that neighborhood, [though, aren't there]?

A: No, no, no, I'm just saying it was a different world.

M: Right, right.

A: And I'm sure a million people have mentioned -- I'm sure Pete remembers it personally -- you walked from [Howard] Street to High Street, you hear Greek (inaudible) every afternoon. [If the] windows were open, you hear the Greek radio all the way down. I did this many times -- many times I did not in the summer -- did not fail to hear the -- I did it, I physically did it -- I heard the Greek from Howard Street down to the [Courthouse Movie], did not stop hearing it. Of course, it shows that we Greeks were barbarians with the radio too loud. Now, the other environment that I remember vividly was -- and it's very important -- now Anne may have given you a picture. You mentioned Anne (inaudible) the Paramount Food Market which the [Plaines] family had and then later when Tom Manos married --

Q: Bertha.

A: -- Bertha Manos, it became the Manos -- but Paramount Food Mart -- if I had a -- was -- had more business than the -- it was then not -- the Manoses owned the building, but not the business. Mr. Manos bought the [entry to that] business, which later became Steve's store -- after the decline of the Greek presence. But during its heyday, in the '20s, '30s and '40s, it was the Paramount Food Market, which was a very large place. I still vividly remember it. I worked there in the '50s.

M: [I remember] (inaudible)

A: '50s, too? Okay, you remember better than I do.

M: '50s.

A: So -- you remember it better, not because you're smart but you're (inaudible) (laughter) so many people worked there, I was one of them.

F: [Pete]? One more?

M: No, thank you very much.

F: (inaudible)

A: I had mentioned earlier the [poppeka]. They all had -- not all. Many of them had picnics. And on Sunday morning, the trucks would pull -- not trucks. Buses would pull up -- Pete, now this (inaudible) you were a little younger, so I



don't know, 'cause --

M: (inaudible)

A: -- was it still there when you were --

M: Yes, yeah.

A: -- growing up? Okay. You -- we're only different a few years but, you know, but at the time Pete grew up, the Greek presence was beginning to drop. But in my day -- how old are you?

M: 65.

A: Well, see, I got you by almost seven years.

M: Yeah, but I remember it.

A: Okay. That's a long time, because it was at the critical --

Q: Right.

M: Right.

A: -- changeover. In the spring and especially summertime, frequently -- I'm tempted to say most. It could even be most. But certainly frequently, there'd be a number of buses that would pull up in front of --

Q: Paramount?

A: -- the Paramount, and the Greeks -- because nobody had a car then. The Greeks would get in and they went -- I think it

was Union County, so --

M: [Patrell's] Grove.

A: Yeah! Very good, very good.

M: (inaudible) I remember. We used to go, I used to go every year.

A: And okay, yeah, yeah (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

Q: -- this is not my --

A: No, no, [he's very] important because, you know, even though he's younger, he grew up in the same world.

M: Yeah, Patrell's Grove.

A: I have inside a picture --

M: That's what we want!

A: I got this from Anne. It's a better one that I have. I'll show it to you.

M: Okay.

A: I'll make one for you.

M: But continue.

A: [Anne's office] sent it. I have ones -- but the ones that -- all these older ones are all cracked up, you know?

Q: That's okay.

M: That's all right, we can --

A: Okay, okay.

Q: We'll take them.

M: Whatever you have give it to us.

A: Okay, I'll make copies of -- I'll show it to you before you leave. What happened was we would go to these picnics and -- now this is -- I remember, because they existed -- my parents told me before I was old enough to remember -- but during the time that I remembered, the veterans, which had now just returned that are -- you know, not that much older than us -- now they're our peers, but they were older than us then -- were there, and they play -- there was always a softball game. The athletes, which sure didn't include me, would play.

M: And we had Mike's [Make-Believe] Ballroom.

A: Mike's Make-Believe Ballroom in a big pavilion, but there were a lot of Greeks, the mothers would bring all the Greek stuff and people would eat and -- not to abuse the word, and certainly not to misuse it -- there was a lot of love there -- [it's that little fact] -- between everybody. You know, the dissensions which -- were there, but now -- especially the later ones, [I was old enough to] notice this -- the dissensions were there -- it was like the Olympic games. You forgot about it during the --

Q: Picnic, right.

A: You know how they did in the Olympic games?

Q: Right, right.

A: That was very important, and it was interesting, was -- again, at the last -- so I went to them for many, many years. The later ones, I was old enough to observe, you know, in the more -- not sarcastic way or negative way, but a more perceptive way -- I noticed that -- and I've forgotten [where this -- brought up] -- there was a separation in the Greek life of a kind. The separation was that the less affluent who still live where you and I live were more participatory in the picnics. The affluent Greeks with the cars who lived in the suburbs generally did not. Some did. But generally did not. Now whether -- and this is -- I don't know what the answer is. I don't know -- it's they felt too good for it or because they had other things to do with their cars -- because they had cars, [so they don't need] -- but basically, the participants in the picnics were people who I saw on West Market. It was partially enforced by the absence of transportation and, you know, you had to carry all the food and all that stuff. I can't overemphasize how big a plus this was in the lives of people who had very few entertainment outlets, and one

[closure] -- I mentioned to Pete -- Pete, earlier, before you came, Pete, the -- you know, the pictures -- I said you probably have pictures [of the] same place -- [Cabot Town] -- all the Greeks --

M: Sure.

A: -- in our neighborhood went to the same photographer. There were two major Greek barbers, Mr. Stakus and [what's the other] --

M: George.

A: What was --

M: George.

A: George's son (inaudible) next to (inaudible)

M: Yeah, what was his name? George.

A: (inaudible) George [Hasanyu].

M: Yeah.

A: Yeah. And even growing -- Mr. [Arkurus], the old Mr. Arkurus who lived in [Weekweg] section -- there are barbers in the Weekweg section -- Jew -- but, you know, they were Jewish. So he would come --

M: Is that right?

A: He had to go out of his way. I realize now, thinking back, that I used to notice he would give a quarter tip.

M: Right. (inaudible)

A: To me, in those days, a quarter was a lot of money.

(laughter) But, you know, he was a -- [of importance] --

M: A haircut was fifty cents, I think, [wasn't it]?

(inaudible) a dollar --

A: Pete, your memory isn't so bad.

M: I got good memory.

A: Better than mine.

M: [Deli] (inaudible) next [to King's was the -- Jim the barber, 'cause you] --

A: Yeah, but that was later when they were -- [the Greeks were out].

M: (inaudible) I'm not being interviewed. Go ahead and talk.  
(laughs)

A: So -- oh, one more thing. I went to Stephen's. And at Stephen's in my era, you could only take two electives, one in your junior, one in your senior year. They really screwed it up. They began by screwing it up by taking women, and I mean that. And then the screw up was they changed the curriculum. So in my day, which was still pure  
(laughter) -- you think I'm trying to be funny. I'm not.

M: (inaudible)

Q: No, I know you're not. That's what makes me laugh.

A: Okay.

M: We know you!

Q: I know you're not. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

M: We respect (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

Q: -- in one ear and out the other.

A: Okay. [I told you] --

Q: After all these years, I -- (laughs)

A: If it goes out the other, it's because -- it's a testament to your limitations! (laughter) Which I feel sorry for!

M: Go on!

A: Now here's what happened. In my junior year -- listen to this, this is really something.

Q: I'm listening, Jim.

A: You've got to hear this!

Q: (inaudible) stopped listening! (laughter)

M: We're listening! We haven't stopped!

A: Stop laughing at me and listen! (laughter)

Q: I'm not laughing at you, I'm laughing with you.

A: I know, I -- you know, you didn't have to say that. Okay -- but this part is serious. The guy who was teaching this

class, Professor [Guadale], I'll never forget him -- he, by the way, told me he never met a student who was less fit for engineering than me on the basis of interest. (laughter) He said you should have been a writer or a lawyer. I -- you know, I was -- I should have told him I should have been a Greek military officer. (laughter) But anyway, what happened was he gave this lecture which -- his specialty was a specialty which was then nascent and -- IQ measurement and aptitude and those types of things, and interest. I gave -- what he told me, it was true. I took this interest thing and I scored at the -- he had never met a guy with less interest in science. And the truth is, I was always interested in other things. So much for my personal digression. He put a graph on the -- my junior year, put a graph in the front of the class -- IQ -- you know, the distribution [of the] bell curve [on -- if you've done] a bell curve. One hump went up, IQs, then it went down (inaudible) like two women's breasts side by side. One went up and the other went down, [then went a long lull] and then went way up and down. I never had the nerve to tell him that the second bump were the Greeks. (laughter) Which I still believe.

M: (inaudible)



A: I was in my junior year --

Q: [Very harmful].

A: -- I [had -- yeah, that's right] -- I had long since left --  
(laughs) I had long since (inaudible) you know? And I saw  
[that -- Robert Treat] -- and in Hoboken, New Jersey, you  
see this guy brings up Robert Treat, I went crazy! But, you  
know, I was very -- that guy -- you know, he had grabbed me,  
he says, look, he says, you don't belong here. You know?  
He did. I told Maria this a number of times. He says the  
president of McGraw Hill is a good friend of mine. You  
belong there. And tried to get me, you know -- he was a  
very sincere man -- to leave Stephen's --

M: To be a writer? To go to (inaudible)

A: Yeah, that or law.

M: -- journalism --

A: [For me]. He thought my best thing -- he gave me all kinds  
of tests in aptitude. So, you know, I had tremendous -- and  
still do. It's obvious, I guess, the way I'm speaking -- a  
lot of respect for him. So I would never say [that] --

M: (inaudible)

A: -- but maybe if he were anyone else, I would have done it  
(overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

M: Holidays, name days --

A: Okay, holidays.

M: Go ahead.

A: If you stood on the corner of -- the reason I'm digressing, in addition to the fact that I'm a jerk is because there's a lot of emotion here.

M: I know.

A: If you stand at the --

M: [Well, I'm] bringing you back.

A: Yeah. If you stood as I did at the intersection of Nelson Place, West Market and Market Street as I did one time -- I will never forget this -- on Easter night, you would see the long trail of candles coming down High Street, going up West Market, even up Nelson and across [Hyde]. And, you know, that was very moving and I remember years later seeing a similar thing about -- a scene in Athens, but this was Newark. Athens is the -- what was that [thing about]?

Q: Where they all come into the center [to, like] --

A: Yeah, but this was Newark. It was a mirror of the Greek population. Then, if you wanted to take a snapshot, [which you're trying to do] -- if you want to give a visual symbol, you might [well] consider that. Another thing --

M: That's good.

A: -- okay? The other thing is how it changed. Before 280 went in -- you know I'm an old bastard -- before 280 came in -- [but] we had become -- a suburbanite here in Roseland, we would see after Easter service an occasional light, but it was diffused on how -- I don't even remember how we used to drive up here (inaudible) and then when 280 came in, for a while, we would see not the string but a lot of lights on 280. And what fascinated me and still does is how things have changed. I think I have the answer why. People still come home with the light --

M: (inaudible)

A: -- but in those days, we all left church at the same time. Now we have the [margaritza] --

Q: Yes.

A: -- which very few people stay for, etcetera.

M: [Well, it's] --

A: So it -- you know, if you were a poet or an artist or something like that, you would -- you could symbolize the different epochs of the Greek life in Newark --

Q: Yes, because the margaritza was eaten at home (inaudible)

A: That's right.

F: [With your family members].

A: That's right. The margaritza only became St. Nicholas --  
sited, S-I-T-E-D -- when a combination of two things  
happened. They saw it as a money-raising thing and it de--

**END OF TAPE 2, SIDE B**

A: There was never a name day in our house (Greek phrase) --  
(break in audio)

A: There was never a name day when we didn't celebrate it. The  
only time that changed was when my -- when the decline --  
medical problems dominated this house. This house was like  
a hospital.

M: Right.

A: And we were typical, not unique.

Q: Yes.

A: And I remember we had no car -- I remember we would take --  
for example, we'd go to the (inaudible) Home, which meant  
three bus changes -- three. I remember doing that when it  
rained. Now, when they came to us, they could -- they had a  
car. The -- of course, the parents were younger too in  
those early years. Every -- all the relatives we visited  
were older, and not only relatives, others. I don't --  
there's no exception to that recollection. And it's sad,

but that's declined. It's almost mathematically eliminated (inaudible) And what would happen is all the kids would be in one area of the room -- the home, the older people would the other and we'd all get together for short periods of time when the young kids would dance and the old people would watch. We also got together when we went to get the food, and the food was always endless. My mother would -- I remember this, this goes way back before I was married when we were on Nelson Place, when she didn't have the conveniences. I mean, it just -- she really worked hard at it and loved it. Everything was created then by her -- the bread, everything -- the bread, everything. She made her own phyllo, she -- you know, I remember Mom, she had the kitchen -- we still have the chairs. She'd make her own phyllo. [But I think] she did that when -- in our days, right?

F: Yeah.

A: And she was no different than all the rest. I'm just saying my recollections. And when -- so the other thing that was interesting is when -- nowadays when people -- very interesting. Sad, actually. When people came by your geographic area, they came to your home. Now when people come by, you take 'em out to a restaurant. Very different.

And, you know, I remember one time -- well, that's personal, I won't go into that, but it's the same thing. The other thing that's interesting is -- I think I -- if I didn't mention this -- stop me -- if I did mention this stop me -- oh yeah, I did I think, how -- even if you didn't like them, your relatives were always invited --

M: Right.

A: -- [to these key] things.

M: Was it open house type of (inaudible)

A: Open house, but everybody knew that they would be there --

M: (inaudible)

A: -- we have a zillion pictures of that.

Q: Well, that's important, too.

M: That's important.

A: Oh, I have a lot of pictures.

M: [We] want to get [photographs].

Q: [You know]?

A: Oh, I didn't know that.

M: Yes.

A: Oh, that I have a lot --

Q: Oh, everything, it --

M: Photographs, [it's] --

Q: -- if you have pictures of living on, you know, Nelson Place in the house, [outdoors] --

A: You know, I have -- let me tell you about Nelson Place. I have a [quick thing] -- when I came from Greece -- back from Greece in my second trip, I didn't know they had knocked down the half of Nelson Place that adjoins 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The other half where you and I lived was still there. And I came to take pictures and I was shocked to see that half of Nelson Place was gone, the southern half. So I took -- I have a picture --

M: We want pictures [of] (inaudible)

A: I have a picture -- well, it means something -- whether you put it in the book or not, it's interesting of [our] (inaudible) [and] --

Q: Look, what we need -- let me just -- just shut [that off a minute] --

(break in audio)

A: What's interesting is this is the evolution of the social ethos. In the [name] days of that early era -- early meaning 1950 and back -- in fact, even 1970 and back -- when you visited a home, you didn't bring food or anything. You just went. But now I've noticed -- and there's nothing

wrong with it, I'm just saying it's a change. These are all cultural mores. There's nothing divinely ordained as good or bad. It's not the Ten Commandments. Now you bring -- you often -- not always, but often bring something, which I can't get used to. I don't like it. Bring something. I'm talking about baked goodies. I'm not talking about the American [life] where you bring a bottle or wine or something. But I'm -- but I've noticed you bring [goulidaki], you bring this, you bring that --

M: That's cultural mores I think more than anything.

A: But it's different --

M: [It's different, right].

A: -- I'm pointing out a difference. And I think the difference is that the [nikopedia] of that era had a different definition. Not lesser, not greater, but different, because it resulted in a different practice --

M: Right.

A: -- it's different.

M: Yeah.

A: And I really meant when I said I'm not applying a value differential --

M: Right.



A: -- because there isn't any. But it is a difference which I noticed.

M: But that's how you see it.

A: Yeah. Well, it was a practice.

M: It's a practice, yeah.

A: So, you know (inaudible)

M: [Compared to] -- you know, I remember that many -- oh my God, this -- many people would bring (inaudible) [deeplas] you bring to the house.

A: Okay.

M: You know?

A: I didn't see that.

M: I saw that.

A: Okay.

M: (inaudible) you saw that?

Q: I -- my recollection's that whoever came to our house brought something, whenever we went to somebody's house --

M: Yeah.

Q: -- we brought something, whether it was flowers or a bottle or --

M: Yeah.

Q: -- to this day, we're doing the same thing.

M: There you go. I think it's a --

A: Yeah, I didn't see that at all.

Q: I don't (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) my mother not bringing food, because --

M: No, no.

Q: -- you had the food --

A: Maybe for the last twenty years -- I know when we go anyplace, Maria brings something.

M: Yeah, well, I think it's a cultural --

A: Well, wait a minute, wait a minute, [Pete]. I'm not talking about the last twenty years. [You're] (inaudible)

Q: No, I'm talking about (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

M: You're talking about prior to --

A: I'm just talking about the history [of the] (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) and you're trying to look at the social mores. I'm saying my recollection, which may or may not be (inaudible) but I'm positive about its accuracy in my exposure was what I described. I'm not trying to make a case for it, but --

Q: I'm trying to think -- my father's name days when we were in New--

(break in audio)

A: Now let me see if there's anything I missed that is worth repeating --

M: How 'bout Greek school, Jim?

A: Oh yeah, Jesus Christ. Greek school. All of my peers, without exception, maybe because we all lived so close to St. Nicholas, without exception went to Greek school in St. Nicholas. I know that other kids who lived away from St. Nicholas had Greek school in their homes. What percentage that is I just don't know. But I do know that of the kids I knew and probably that you knew, 100 percent went to Greek school. Now that's, you know, small world. It's [Sydney] Place, Nelson Place and [those on West Market] who I knew.

M: How many days a week did you go to it?

A: That I can't remember.

M: Did you go every day?

A: I think I did but I don't know. My brother would remember it. He's -- remembers everything like that. I wish I remembered, but I don't. I think -- 90 percent, 100 -- every day, but not 100 percent.

M: And Sunday school?

A: Sunday school was every Sunday. And Sunday -- and the altar

-- now the altar -- to be an altar boy was an honor. I was a good boy. I was a mama's boy and I was thrown out [of the altar] (laughter) because --

Q: (Greek phrase)

A: I was a nice boy -- because I was sword fighting with a candle with this other altar boy, Nick [Modus], and Father Spiridakis -- and both our parents were sort of active in the church, it didn't mean a damn thing to him. He threw us both out. My father beat the hell out of me when he heard it. Let me tell you a quick story. If I'm blabbing, I'll --

(break in audio)

M: You're on, Jim.

A: Okay. Let me think now of what I wanted to cover --

M: Sunday school -- how 'bout plays? Greek plays?

A: The Greek plays were relatively frequent. Relatively frequent. There were Greek plays, mainly by [Theoktopus]. I remember even Eureka chapter [who had a -- you appeared in it, too].

Q: I ran it.

A: We had a -- [you ran] --

Q: We had a production at St. (inaudible)

A: At Saint -- [you ran it]?

Q: I ran the whole thing.

A: Figures.

Q: I was the director --

A: [You were successful].

Q: -- and producer.

A: It was successful.

Q: It was fantastic.

A: It was successful.

M: I forgot about that.

A: But in St. Nicholas proper, they were largely from the Theloktopus. Sometimes they had people from outside, but largely indigenous.

M: [How about] Greek school? [Did you have] plays in Greek school?

A: We had plays in Greek school. We had poems at every --

Q: Major holiday.

A: -- major holiday, especially March 25<sup>th</sup>. Also, which was interesting, a few times I remember seeing what was -- to use a word again, because it applies -- endemic in Greek culture -- in Greece, [karayurgi] -- how do you -- is that

the right word?

F: No, (inaudible)

A: What kind of a greenhorn are you? (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) [it's kalayoz].

Q: Kalayoz.

A: Yeah, the puppet show which they used to have under the Ottomans.

M: Right.

A: And which has an interesting geopolitical background. And those shows would sometimes be at St. Nicholas and sometimes at [halls], when the Greeks would go there and the kalayoz show, you'd pay to go in. Under the Ottoman Empire, sometimes these shows would poke fun at the Turks --

Q: So, [yeah] --

A: -- in indirect ways. But they were largely just plain entertainment and they were professional. People made a living doing that and they would go from Greek community to Greek community. They were itinerants. And we had that, too. We also had occasional Greek movies. I remember one vividly. Vividly. It showed -- it was a, like -- not a soap opera, but -- a movie where it was the (inaudible) against the Turks during the Turkish conquest. And what I

remember is an awful lot of Greek warriors in the [Adzung, white], against the -- this was before the days of Technicolor -- I am an old bastard -- before the age of Technicolor -- you'd see the white vividly [kind of] --

M: Give me the Wizard of Oz! (laughter) (inaudible)

A: -- contrasting against, you know, the landscape, the hillscape, running up the hills, attacking the Kurds, and I remember I was young, and I got [very] -- I was so excited, you know, I could have killed Turkey myself. (laughter)

M: How about [Greek dances] --

A: We had that.

M: You remember Greek dancing?

A: The Greek -- oh, that's very important. God, every one of the relatively healthy (inaudible) had a dance. Some of them [several a year], usually one a year. So [Ohaffa Goffa] -- I even remember Goffa dances, (Greek phrase) all had a dance. Oh, I gotta tell you this. You know, this stuff comes --

M: Good.

A: -- that's why I wanted to make a copy of these things.

M: Keep going!

A: My father told me the story, [but] he was so damn honest

when he said one in two equals bullshit, believe it equals bullshit -- anything he says. He was that way. At that time, there was a controversy in the Congress about immigration. And the Greeks had a lousy image.

Q: Why?

A: Just plain antipathy, prejudice. Very bad image. Not from what they did --

Q: Because they were law-abiding citizens. They --

A: That's right, [yeah].

Q: -- paid their taxes, everything.

A: [They, no, they] -- oh, I gotta tell you something. There's another -- now I got two stories to tell you. So Eureka chapter now, they figured out these dishwashers and so on, these illiterates, figured out that what they would do is they would host a tuxedo black and white tie dinner at the hotel Essex House and they would invite the congressman who had the biggest mouth -- excuse me -- hostile to us from New Jersey as the honored guest. As the honored guest. Now [the mopped], they attacked Jesse Helms. These guys, coming from a heritage which invented the Trojan Horse went the other way. So they invited this congressman and whether you wanted to go or not, you went. So all these busboys and dishwashers and restaurant owners and everything else were



there in tuxedos. Such women as existed then were there, too. This was --

Q: What year was --

A: -- in the '20s.

Q: -- in the '20s, okay.

A: Yeah, in the '20s, that I know. It was at the time of -- one of the recurring -- not frequent, but recurring immigration peaks of controversy. So this congressman was so stunned by the elegance of the evening -- they had good speakers and everything else, everything was classy -- that whether he meant it or not at the moment, his behavior changed anyway, he said that he had misunderstood the Greeks, he said all the right things. It was a tremendous success. That's one thing. You know, since we Greeks are, you know, kind of screwy with -- schizophrenic, that was one side of us. Now I'll tell you another side. (laughter) One of the places -- including my father, that -- stopping points on the way to the food business for these young Greeks, they had just come over, they were teenagers -- was Thomas Edison plant in West Orange.

Q: Did any work for you?

A: A lot.

Q: See, that's something we don't know.

A: (inaudible) [tell you the story]. It was loaded with immigrants, some of whom were Greek, who were vastly outnumbered by the Italians, who were also a bunch of kids, but they were not Greek and the Greeks were not Italian. Formula for conflagration.

(break in audio)

A: -- and the law of combustions prevailed. So what would happen was when the Greeks came out, it was winter. And it was a bad winter. And the Greeks were vastly outnumbered. So as they came out, the Italians would be throwing ice balls at 'em, and -- which hurt. But worse than that humiliating. So my father took pains to point out that the hero was a [rumiyaki]. That happened twice. He says (Greek phrase) [this pretty close. It's paraphrased, but] it's pretty close. (Greek phrase)

M: (Greek phrase)

A: (Greek phrase) (inaudible) (laughter) (Greek phrase) he mentioned the guy's name. He was the head, but they all did the same thing.

M: [And after]?

A: Listen, [these] Italians were, you know, kids like these guys, there were just many more of them, and they thought they were fighting civilized people. They didn't realize

they were fighting [Turks]. (laughter) They all had steel bars under their overcoats.

M: [They overwhelmed and went after them].

A: Yeah. So when the ice balls started, they (inaudible) (laughter) a bunch of kids! You know, they were probably fourteen, fifteen, sixteen --

M: They went after them --

A: Yeah, with these steel bars -- and these poor Italians were defenseless.

M: [Oh yeah].

A: You know, what do you do against a steel bar? And this one guy -- and he went after the leader, because apparently it's a loudmouth Italian who was leader -- and there was one very athletic Greek -- [to ruminate] my father [pains, to -- right? To -- take the pains to repeat] --

Q: These people lived in Newark?

A: Yeah, but they -- well, I don't know how they got up there. He chased him -- it was a marathon. He never got him. Pop says it's good (inaudible) if he got him, he would have killed him. He thought he would have killed him. You know, he would have hit him, he would have killed him. The point was to kill him. He chased him into Newark. (laughter)

Q: [From West Orange? Right? From West Orange]?

A: Yeah! Well, it was a marathon. I guess they ran out, got tired, began walking, then he started running again --

Q: God.

A: -- until he got in the Italian neighborhood --

M: (inaudible)

A: -- and the Greek -- I don't know -- and then the guy left, because then it'd be his turn.

Q: (laughs) Oh my goodness.

A: Oh, I got to tell you another story. These guys were something. You have to remember their age.

Q: And this was in the teens?

A: Yeah. Oh, by the time my father was 20, he was a respectable, civilized man. [And the rest of them] --

Q: But this was in the 1910s, 19--

A: Yeah!

Q: Yeah, okay.

A: Yeah, yeah. [Oh, that's] -- I got a couple things. See, it just goes on forever and, you know, bring your bedding here for Christ's sakes. (laughter)

M: I'm ready to leave (inaudible)

A: So --

Q: (inaudible)

A: -- no, I just want to tell two things. Keep quiet, Pete, or I'm going to forget. Remember I'm an old bastard.

M: You keep saying that.

A: It's true. (laughter) One weekend, as was the case, apparently, often, or periodically, the people from one [houryo] would rent a house in Ocean Grove -- I don't know how the hell they got there -- and so the people from my father's area, maybe from his houryo, but he said his group had rented a place in Ocean Grove. And another house nearby, unknown to them, had been rented by a bunch of guys from [Savous].

M: Oh God.

Q: Oh boy.

A: All kids, basically. So they decided that they would eat and drink together, which is bad news for Greeks.

Q: Oh is it?

A: Oh God. But when you have two identifiably different groups -- so it degenerated into a challenge (inaudible) (laughter)

Q: Of course. (laughter)

A: Who knows who really did. At that age? Who the --

Q: Right.

A: Who was going to drink who under the table? Who were the --  
[you had] (inaudible) so the idea was the last man standing  
--

M: Oh God. Drink 'til you fall.

A: Right. It wasn't -- who could take it -- who could stand.  
My father -- you know, Mister St. Nicholas and all that --  
so what happened -- I didn't have the nerve to tell my  
father, "Well, they probably were drinking faster than you  
were." But I wouldn't dare do that. The [Savlouki] became  
unconscious first. Unconscious. (laughter) So my -- I  
should be ashamed --

(break in audio; sound effect)

(laughter)

A: (inaudible) You can imagine a bunch of sixteen year olds,  
right?

Q: Oh God. Sounds like Shogun! Yeah, when the Japanese -- oh  
God --

A: [I mean -- or] there's another one that -- there's another  
one I got to tell you. [And these were] -- I said what  
happened after? [Oh], I mean, it was fine. You know, they  
understood. It was, you know --

Q: [It's what happened, and they] would have done the same to us.

M: Oh yeah. [Our truce] is over, that's all. (laughter)

A: Yeah, yeah, it's --

M: [Move on].

A: Yeah, yeah, move on. I mean, it really -- a different era. Now there was one more thing I wanted to tell you. It was like this. Just give me one second then you can get the hell out of here. Give me a minute.

Q: (inaudible)

A: Keep quiet, lady. You're not [talking this] -- I am.

(break in audio)

**End - James Gevas**